

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 06 TEL AVIV 003032

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1. Israel-U.S. Relations](#)
- [2. Russia: Yukos Trial](#)

Key stories in the media:

Yediot and Jerusalem Post quoted White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan as saying Tuesday that the

SIPDIS
First Lady's visit to the region is "an opportunity for Mrs. Bush to reinforce our commitment to promoting freedom and supporting women and girls in the Middle East."

All media reported on incoming Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin's first meeting with the members of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Tuesday. Maariv led with his warning that Israeli airliners are being targeted. The media also cited his warning of a rise in Jewish terror and quoted him as saying: "Israel will not bear another political assassination." Diskin also warned that Hamas was showing restraint and not carrying out attacks at the moment because it wanted to "make it through" the PA elections, "but that does not mean it will not change afterward." Israel Radio cited press agencies as saying that IDF forces killed a Hamas activist near Rafah, along the border with Egypt. The station reported on exchanges of fire in the area overnight. Yediot reported that Palestinian demonstrators and IDF forces clashed Tuesday in the town of Dura, near Hebron. Leading media quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying Tuesday that the greatest threat on the northern border at present are attempts to abduct IDF soldiers.

As all media continued to report that one quarter of the Katif Bloc (Gush Katif) residents have signed on to the Nitzanim relocation plan, the media cited mounting pressure from the government on the settlers in the area to join the plan, including an implied warning that if an insufficient number of people sign up, the entire plan to move the settlers en bloc will be canceled. Ha'aretz says that the government's position on negotiating with the settlers on the issue will be discussed in a session of the ministerial committee on disengagement, headed by PM Sharon, this morning. Sharon, who visited the Nitzanim area on Tuesday, complained about the slow activity of building contractors of the site. Some media quoted contractors as saying that the government has not presented any valid plan of action. Ha'aretz reported that Sharon's visit to New York on Sunday is expected to bring to a head the raging controversy in the American Jewish controversy between those for and against Sharon and the disengagement. Ha'aretz reported that Sharon advisor Dov Weisglass and the deputy director of the Finance Ministry, Joseph Bachar, are slated to visit Washington next week to discuss American aid for development projects in the Negev and the Galilee. Israel is seeking millions of dollars for the projects, as well as to move army camps from the Gaza Strip as part of the disengagement. Jerusalem Post quoted Gen. Yosef Mishlav, the coordinator of GOI activities as saying at a meeting last week with Vice Premier Shimon Peres, officials from the World Bank and the Quartet countries, and the U.S. envoy and adviser on economic affairs to the PA, that he foresees a booming economy in Gaza after

disengagement. Israel Radio reported that Peres is due to meet with Jordan's King Abdullah II in Petra today. Yediot reported that senior Israeli and Syrian officials could meet at the Davos Economic Conference in Jordan, which will convene during the weekend.

Citing Reuters, Ha'aretz reported that on Tuesday, U.S. security envoy Gen. William Ward praised the PA for reshaping often rival security services, whose mission he said must include keeping militants in check.

Ha'aretz reported that some 100 survivors of terror attacks, relatives of those killed, Magen David Adom (Red Shield of David) paramedics, and volunteers of Zaka, which works in rescue and recovery assignments following terrorist attacks, will testify in what Ha'aretz says U.S. authorities regard as the most important trial in the U.S. since the 9/11 attacks. The trial of four Arab-Americans belonging to Islamic Jihad and raising funds to finance terror attacks, including some that took place in Israel, is due to start in Tampa, Fla., on June 6.

Afghan Minister of Women's Affairs Massouda Jalal was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post that took place in Kabul that Afghanistan supported ties with "the countries in partnership with the U.S., and Israel is one of those countries." However, Afghan FM Abdullah Abdullah told Jerusalem Post that official relations between Afghanistan and Israel could start only following a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Jerusalem Post cited the UN mission in Jerusalem as saying that Israel will support Qatar's bid for temporary membership on the UN Security Council. The newspaper had reported last month on Qatar's petition to Israel on the matter.

Leading media reported that Jonathan Pollard was "disappointed and disgusted" by his first meeting ever with an Israeli ambassador (Danny Ayalon), which took place at the Butner, N.C., federal prison Tuesday. The media quoted Pollard as saying that the GOI should stop lying and act vigorously for his release. Jerusalem Post quoted a GOI official in Jerusalem as saying that raising Israel's interest in freeing Pollard was linked to the disengagement plan, which the U.S. wants to see succeed, and which it believes has the potential to go a long way toward changing the Middle East. Jerusalem Post quoted Pollard's lawyer Larry Dub as saying: "There are many who believe that Pollard is one of the trump cards that Americans are dangling in front of Israel to complete the disengagement plan." Likewise, Dub said that Sharon was using Pollard -- and the prospects that he may be freed -- as a way of softening up right-wing opposition to the plan. Ha'aretz reports that Pollard has rejected attempts at an Israeli-American deal linking his release to the implementation of the disengagement plan, to which he is opposed.

Maariv reported that Moni Micha, the son of Israeli Consul for Consular Affairs in Miami Shmuel Micha, is working illegally in the U.S.

Leading media reported that FM Silvan Shalom is slated to appear before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee next week to discuss the deterioration of relations between him and Ambassador Ayalon, as well as allegations that Shalom's wife, Judy Nir-Moses-Shalom, intervened in ministry appointments.

Citing Malaysia's national news agency Bernama, Jerusalem Post reported that Malaysia's Deputy PM Najib Razak called Israel's refusal to let his country's former PM Mahathir Mohamad enter Jerusalem Tuesday "arrogant." Mohamad had said during an anti-Semitic diatribe in 2003 that Jews rule the world by proxy.

Ha'aretz published the results of the monthly Peace Index Poll, conducted on May 2-3: 56 percent of the Jewish public support the disengagement plan, while 38 percent oppose it and 6 percent are undecided. A month ago, support was at 59 percent and opposition at 36 percent, and in February the figures were 62 percent and 29 percent respectively.

1. Israel-U.S. Relations:

Summary:

Columnist Avraham Tirosh wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Silvan Shalom ... is strong in the [Likud's]

Central Committee and weak in Washington, and ...
[Ambassador] Danny Ayalon ... is strong in Washington but is a nonentity in the Central Committee. Thus, Ayalon can start packing."
Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The way to free Pollard is paved with restraint and modesty, his and that of the state he wants to reach [i.e. Israel]."

Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "No one can doubt [AIPAC's] invaluable contribution in making Israel's case in the halls of Congress, and one can only hope this affair will have no lasting impact on its effectiveness."

Block Quotes:

I. "Ambassador Ayalon Can Start Packing"

Columnist Avraham Tirosh wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (May 18): "Sharon could not care less about the Likud's Central Committee on key matters, such as Palestinian statehood and disengagement. He himself does not depend on the committee's members, because he was elected in primaries. But if the Likud organizes its next [internal] elections in the present form, and its Knesset members are chosen by the committee's members and not in primaries, Sharon will need them badly in order not to find himself in a small minority within his faction after the elections. So, those who need the committee's members also critically need Silvan Shalom, who is strong in the Central Committee and weak in Washington, and not [Ambassador] Danny Ayalon, who is strong in Washington but is a nonentity in the Central Committee. Thus, Ayalon can start packing."

II. "The Way to Free Pollard"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (May 18): "Jonathan Pollard, an American Jew once employed by U.S. naval intelligence who then spied for pay on behalf of Israeli intelligence, lost his freedom nearly 20 years ago.... There are various elements responsible for Pollard's suffering. First, there is Pollard himself, who risked the delicate relationship Israel (and the Jewish communities in his country) have with the defense establishment and the administration in Washington, with an adventurism that included elements of cynicism and greed. A braggart, Pollard refused to express regret. If he had behaved differently in the first half of the 1980s, the entire affair never would have taken place. When it did, if he had behaved differently, he might have already been free by now. Next in line of responsibility for Pollard's pain is the U.S. defense and intelligence establishment, which suffered a wave of humiliations the year of Pollard's arrest in 1985, as spies were uncovered in the intelligence agencies. That establishment was influenced by the personal hostility from then-defense secretary Casper Weinberger toward Israel, and objected

SIPDIS
to the special, preferential treatment given Israel. Those two elements were outside Israel's control, but Israeli governments -- the third element responsible for Pollard's plight -- should have behaved more wisely: not to provoke the Pentagon with periodic scandals, and not to make Pollard into a national hero, whose freedom would be trumpeted here as if he were a redeemed prisoners. The way to free Pollard is paved with restraint and modesty, his and that of the state he wants to reach."

III. "The Challenge For AIPAC"

Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (May 18): "Next week the [American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)] holds its annual conference in Washington under one of the darkest clouds in its history. Two senior AIPAC employees -- policy director Steve Rosen and analyst Keith Weissman -- are under investigation by the FBI for allegedly receiving classified material passed to them by Defense Department intelligence analyst Larry Franklin. Franklin was arrested by the FBI earlier this month; Rosen has reportedly told people he also expects to be indicted in the near future. AIPAC dismissed Rosen and Weissman last month. Whether justified or not, the timing of that dismissal was unfortunate.... Right now ... Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman need and deserve AIPAC's public backing, and AIPAC needs and deserves the support of both the American-Jewish community and Israel. No one can doubt its invaluable contribution in making Israel's case in

the halls of Congress, and one can only hope this affair will have no lasting impact on its effectiveness. But it's also time for AIPAC to focus on that mission -- while also heeding Rabin's words to resist the temptation to become 'shtadlanim' [lobbyists] in those places in Washington, and elsewhere, where it is more the business of the Israeli government to take the lead."

12. Russia: Yukos Trial:

Summary:

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in an editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The tragic staged trial of the Yukos owners has triggered immense anger among democracy-lovers around the world -- but not in Israel: not a single voice of protest has been heard here."

Block Quotes:

"Show Trial in Moscow"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in an editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (May 18): "Last year, Michael Khodorkovsky, 41, a Russian businessman of Jewish origin, was the key shareholder in the oil and energy corporation Yukos. His wealth was then assessed at around USD 15 billion. He is now awaiting the conclusion of the verdict in the crowded hall of Moscow's municipal courthouse, imprisoned in a barred cage and without hope of a minimally fair trial.... The tragic staged trial of the Yukos owners has triggered immense anger among democracy-lovers around the world - but not in Israel: not a single voice of protest has been heard here. Stories about 'Jewish oligarchs from Russia,' who supposedly transfer billions of 'Russian Mafia' dollars to Israel -- notions that are totally unfounded, even metaphorically -- have blurred and blinded Israeli public opinion's discernment about what's good and what's evil in Russia, between a fair trial and the travesty of justice in Moscow."

KURTZER